

AMARANTHUS

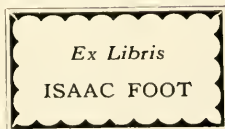
A BOOK OF LITTLE SONGS

BERNARD CAPES



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AMARANTHUS



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A BOOK OF LITTLE SONGS

BY *Edward Joseph*
Bernard Capes
'''

LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN
ADELPHI TERRACE
MCMVIII

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"Qu'est-c'que vous lui donnerez ?

Compagnons de la Marjolaine—"

"De l'or, des bijoux assez."

"Ell' n'est pas intéressée."

"Mon coeur je lui donnerai."

"En ce cas-la, choisissez."



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Love Wanton

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To R . . .

13th November, 1900.

*What will the world do, dearest, when we go,
And take Love with us to the stars above—
This world, to which sweet Love himself we owe?
How can we claim yet pay this debt of love?*

*O, Love! is earth's or heaven's this treasure-trove?
O, earth, for Love's sake yield thy claim of him!
"Aye, yield, cries Faith, so I the heir of Love,
May fill the place and take the name of him."*

*Faith become Love, and Love bequeathed to Faith?—
Ah, happy earth, and happy stars above!
Destined to conquer Time and Space and Death,
When Love's in Heaven, and Faith on earth is Love!*



LOVE WANTON



AMARANTHUS

SHALL we audit, hair by hair,
Cupid's golden tresses?
Billet Venus on a genus?
Play the doctrinaire
To April shepherdesses?

Sound its shallowness the brook?
Analyse the roses?
Reason by phytology,
Nodding o'er a book,
Why the poppy dozes?

Puff!—the wind is blowing free,
The light clouds are racing;
For *how* things are why have a care,
Seeing here they be
With none of our placing?

Learning is an anxious trust
Held with much contriving.
Humour flies analysis.
Only Dryasdust,
Makes a *Scheme* of living.

SPRING SONG

Love comes like the Cuckoo,
When Spring's lady-smocking,
Unexpected, unseen,
Till his voice through the green
Takes April with mocking.

See the freshets run over,
Gold mary-buds spilling!
Not a sheath of its blade,
Not a nestling delayed,
But his chime is fulfilling.

Spring's eyes glistened blue,
When the hard time was over,
Half in tears, innocent;
But the passion they pent
Was for him to discover.

Ah, the wind on the hill,
And the sedge creaking shrilly!
"Ah, the ice on the mere!"
Mocked the cuckoo: "And here
Is the daffodowndilly!"

O love, O dear cuckoo,
We doubt you and flout you,
 You thief of a bed !—
 Yet, when all has been said,
What would Spring be without you ?

GIVE me a lover, Saint Valentine,
Short or tall, so a man he be.
What hath hapt to the gallants' eyne,
Sithen my heart is for all to see?

The tailor he dipt and he made salaam;
Then lookt the lady full in the face:—
Let me close you your bodice, ma'am.
Men prefer to guess at the place.

He made her her bodice high and trim,
To the best of his art he did his part.
But when she stood up from the hands of him—
Lo! it appeared she had no heart.

MERLE to her dear,
Hid in a briar,
Beckoned "Come near!
Hush, little squire!

Who is that fellow? What does he here,
Watching our house from the byre?"

"Tchuck! Bobolink!"

Quo' he so soft:

"The clothes-line hangs in the garden croft.

Smocks and little frilled tuckers jink

Over the wall;

And here is the rogue that would filch 'em all,"

Quo' he so soft.

Merle on the sward

Under the briar:

"Tuckers, my lord

He can't require.

Yet in his sharp young eyes, on my word

Twinkles a thievish fire."

“ Well, ma’am, and well ! ”

Quo’ he, elate,

“ If not linen, why then the plate.

A thief he is, as it’s plain to tell,

Holding aloof,

Wi’ his eye on the window under the roof.”

Quo’ he, elate.

Thoughtful the wife,

Winking and blinking :

“ Silence, my life,

Tchuck ! I am thinking.

Who, when the wintry winds are rife,

Brings crumbs and water for drinking ? ”

“ The old man’s dearie,”

Quo’ he, quo’ he.

“ Tucker and smock and frill,” said she,

“ And lips as sweet as the cherry.

Come kiss me, chuck !

I know the fruit that he waits to pluck ! ”

Quo’ she, quo’ she.

WHEN Cloelia proved obdurate
 To Phaedon's fond advances,
 Repaid with scorn his woful state,
 With flout his utterances,

"Forego," he cried, "this acrid strain,
 From such sweet lips a schism,
 And dumbly quit me of my pain
 By posy symbolism !

"For hope, a white rose ; for despair,
 A red, pluck to thy bosom !"—
 He turned ; then looked—the wilful fair
 Had donned a crimson blossom.

But, so it chanced, within the cup
 A Cupid, honey-tipsy,
 In rage at being woken up,
 Thrust out and stung the gipsy.

Then, all compunction for his deed,
 For cap to the disaster,
 Rubbed Phaedon's lips with honey-mead,
 To serve the wound for plaster,

“ Cross my hand with a penny bright.”

“ Why, pretty gipsy, why? ”

“ I saw a face in the coals last night.

Whose? Would you know?

Shall I whisper it? ”

“ O!

Fie, pretty gipsy, fie! ”

“ Cross my hand with a shilling sheen.”

“ Why, pretty gipsy, why? ”

“ I saw a coach drive over the green.

Who was inside?

A silver bride? ”

“ Fie, pretty gipsy, fie! ”

“ Cross my hand with a golden crown.”

“ Why, pretty gipsy, why? ”

“ I saw them stand by the altar stone.

Eight maids were fain

To bear her train;

And the bells rang merrily.”

“ Who was the man and who the maid ? ”

“ Fie, little lady, fie ! ”

“ Tell, tell, tell what the red coals said.

Silver and gold

Are known of old

To lie, pretty gipsy, lie.

Tell, tell, tell what the red coals said ! ”

“ Fie, little lady, fie ! ”

CHLOE, will you hear me woo?
That I promise, that I'll do.
I will make thee soft slippers
Of the pretty mouse's ears;
Stockings, just a single pair,
Spun by spiders from the air;
Supple garters lightly wove
Of the springey curls of Love;
Gown of lace-wings, hardly felt,
Clasped with my arms for belt.

I will graft my thorny drouth
With the sweet slip of thy mouth,
Till thy loveliness shall make
Buds of beauty for my sake.

Like a wild hare in its form,
Chloe, in thy bosom warm
Sweetly, sweetly let me lie,
Hearing all the world go by.

"Love is give and take,"
 says he,
"Every gander knows—
Wear the prickle for my sake;
For thine, I'll wear the rose."

"*Grazie*, kind and true,"
 says she,
"For that noble dower—
Only, between me and you,
I should like the flower."

MIGNONETTE, Mignonette,
Of all flowers the pet—
O beautiful, beautiful, sweet Mignonette !
Dear kind little blossom,
Soft, soft in the bosom,
Who gives to thee, takes from thee, sweet
Mignonette ?
Was it thou at her ear that shed sweets passing
by me ?
Is it thou in her shape, or herself that doth fly me ?
Is it thou, is it she, Mignonette, Mignonette,
That I follow, must follow,
As the Summer the Spring,
Who hides warm in the wing
Of its darling the swallow ?

As love chases the swallow
To the eaves and the leaves
High up under the roof,
Mignonette, so I follow.
Ah ! to whose little chamber,
Sweetheart ?
As I clamber,
I trow not, I know not
What dream flew before to the room high aloof.

But my heart pants delight
In the thought—half a fright,
Half delirious sweetness—
That the spirit of the flower,
That the spirit of the hour
Shall reveal love's completeness.

CUPID AND PSYCHE

By day, the love she takes of him
Must mock its own dear rapture,
Lest her sweet breast that aches of him
Condone in thought its capture.
She holds the woodland echo's breath
With plaints of cruel wooing;
She chides the rifled flower beneath,
That love was its undoing.
The echoes hear her, meek and meet,
And clap his praises after:
The hoarse burn follows on her feet
With an inward laughter.
Her white throat throbs in light and shade
To many a heart-free chansonette—
And still her fire is unallayed,
And still she's Amorette.
Then night, and low-lie-down the call;
And all the world's aloof.
Love's whispered benedictions fall
Like leaves upon the roof.
The high trees make a mystic close;
The garden sighs perfume;
Only the heart of a wild rose
Beats in the trancèd room,

In all the house there's not a sound.

A glow-worm lights the stair.

He bends to heal her lips' red wound;

He's caught into her hair.

She never meant to chide the flower—

She whispers dear regret.

And still she owns her in his power;

And still she's Amorette.

Love kept me an hour
From all hours that pass ;
In her breast, like a flower,
She stored it, sweet, fragrant,
Of all time the vagrant,
Alas, and alas !

Of all time the flower,
Of all hours that pass,
For me was that hour,
When I cared claim it,
And kiss it and shame it,
Alas, and alas !

I dared not, sweet hour—
I let thee go pass ;
And heaven is my dower.
My crown is stars seven :
I am a saint in heaven,
Alas, and alas !

LOVE FALSE

SHE was throated like the stare—

Well-a-day !

She was white as buds of May—

Well-a-day !

And all with their sweet scent

Her bodie was besprent,

That to kiss her was a joy beyond compare.

If her mouth the scarlet hips—

Well-a-day !

Would for redness all dismay—

Well-a-day !

Ah ! it took its comely stain

From the truths that she had slain ;

For falser than the serpent were her lips.

Once with passion I did rave—

Well-a-day !

Now I will not, though she say

Well-a-day !

For the cry of damnèd Love

All her beauty doth disprove,

And her heart it is a stone above his grave.

SPEAK low! What do you ask, false love? Speak
low!

Sin cannot speak too low.
The night-wind stealing to thy bosom,
The dead star dropping like a blossom,
Less voiceless be than thou!

Low, lower yet, false love, if to confess
What guilt, what shameful need?
God, who can hear the budding grass,
And flake kiss flake in the snowy pass,
Your secret else will heed.

Ah! thou art silent, not from love, but fear,
And true love knows no fear.
Creeping, soft-footed, in the dust,
It is not love, but conscious lust,
Which dreads that God shall hear.

“ LITTLE Lady Dormette,
Hark to my crying !
Would not you come to me
Though I were dying,
Little Lady Dormette ?
Kiss my hot eyes,
Make them forget !

Little Lady Dormette,
Why have you left me ?
Sure not to lie with him
That hath bereft me,
Little Lady Dormette ?
O, do not kiss him,
Lest he forget !

Little Lady Dormette,
Theè I so grieve for ;
If thou forsakest me,
What shall I live for !
Little Lady Dormette,
Crush thy heart to mine,
Make it forget ! ”

“ ODD little merchant, quaint and fair,
What are the goods thou criest there ? ”

“ Reeds from the river’s kissing wet;
Flute *à bec* and flageolet;

“ Sweet fife pitched to the wanton’s note;
Piccolo tuned at Venus’ throat;

“ Bird-calls shaped from the *blancoflour*;
Whistles, for love, of *l’herbe d’amour*;

“ Pandean pipes, red lips to pout!
Here on the grass I’ll turn ’em out.”

“ Merchant, what was the stick let fall,
Shrunk, dry, withered, the last of all ? ”

“ That ? But a phantom voice, my prince.
Put your lips to it; hear—and wince!

“ Music dead as the boxwood row
From which it was cut long years ago—

“ Cut by Lancelot, sweet and green,
From under the heart of his Dorine.

“ How she leaned to him over the hedge,
Hear, if you will—your teeth on edge.

“ ’Tis a garrulous pipe. There’s more beside,
Of a love betrayed and a girl that died.

“ Men will be men and women frail.
The song goes wheezy, and something stale.

“ Put it away like rusty weeds,
And choose ye one of my tuneful reeds.”

“ Flageolet and flute *à bec*,
Merchant, little of these I reckon.

“ Little I reckon of the wanton reed;
This voice from the past is all my need.

“ Is all my need for its ancient teen—
Ah, love and youth, and the boxwood green!
And my no longer, but God’s Dorine! ”

I THOUGHT the Muse would string my lyre;
That Love would kneel to me,
Shameful with half-expressed desire
A poet's love to be.

My rhymes were uttered but to die;
No man would look thereon;
And Love laughed at my vanity
And left me woebegone.

Thereat I held my soul as dead
And quit of the rhyming lust.
I wrapped my heart in sheeted lead,
And threw my pen in the dust.

Now a woman who walked alone
Trode on it where it lay—
And straight the barren style was sown
With blossoms thick as May.

Then I dipt the point in my laden heart
And left the pen to its will,
While I thought of her who scorned the part
She played in my soul's ill.

And now (because of my bitter fate
Whereof I make my moan)—
And now the world proclaims me great
Because my heart is a stone.

WE were three,
Thou, and I, and he,
We three pledged to be one
Then and always
Till time was done.
Shadow of him wert thou,
Thrown by the Sun
Small at his feet, my sweet,
Small, since our lovely day
At its meridian shone.

We were three,
Thou, and mother, and he—
We two and thou
Alone.
And now—
And now, dear God,
But one!
Night and the empty street—
Baby under the sod—
And he—
Standing out in the sun,
With another's soul at his feet.

LOVE GENTLE

PHYLIS, I cannot woo in rhyme,
As courtlier gallants woo
With utterances sweet as thyme
And melting as the dew.

An arm to shield, a loving tongue,
Strong faith and lealty—
These, my true-heart, are all the song
That I could make for thee.

And yet, although the rhyming art
I might not thee contrive,
I'd print upon thy lips, sweetheart,
A poem that should live.

MAY Nature speed to woo thee
 By lawn and hollow grove,
All flowers lean unto thee,
Nor life unkind subdue thee
 With scarcity of love.

May day its treasures bring thee,
 And when its sands have run,
The thrush to slumber sing thee,
And every starlet fling thee
 The glory of a sun.

O, GENTLE winds that brought my love to me!
Sweet tired, happy winds!
Cling ye, like bats, to wall and tower and tree,
The whiles I sing to ye,
Dear winds,
That sang my love to me.

Freighted so often with my labouring sighs,
Unload ye now, sweet winds,
And rest your weary fans, while I devise
The gentlest lullabies,
Dear winds,
To kiss to sleep your eyes.

For death ye've changed me life; bought love with
care.

O, sleep and dream, dear winds!
Wise merchants of my cargo of despair,
Dream on, and with me share,
Dear winds,
The love my love can spare.

Love, though for playing
In laps of roses;
Love, though for straying
Whither love chooses—
Curious visitor,
Probing inquisitor—
Love makes his home in a quiet heart.

Back from his feasting,
Honey-bemired,
Back he'll come questing,
Sated and tired;
Seeking of peacefulness
Old sense of easefulness,
Wearying sick for his quiet heart.

Who in her garden
Waiteth him throbbing?
Such cry for pardon
Moves her to sobbing.
Arms soft as gossamer
Stretch and embosom her,
Love's weary wings round her quiet heart.

WAKE! Wake!

The rills gush in the fields,
The buds throw their shields,
And life is reborn for love's sake.

The joy of the sky
Calls the lark up on high;

The honey-bees wing from their fields.

I hear at my window the voice of the South;
And my frost waits to melt on the bud of your
mouth.

Wake! Wake!

Call me out to the green,
O, my heart! O, my queen!

Let your love be reborn for my sake,
Like the gush of the rills,
Like the light on the hills,

And the voice of the laverock between.

Sun, honey and song are the needs of my drouth;
And all are to find in one kiss of your mouth.

“ SWEET dove, I have fed you with milk-bread and
corn :

Look out from your tree,
And tell me who winds in the forest his horn,
And what do you see? ”

“ I see a brave huntsman go riding across
A blue glade of hyacinth fretted with moss.”

“ Dear dove, you have sipped the rose-dew from my
hand :

Look out from your tree,
And tell me who sings of the rose of the land,
And what he may be? ”

“ By his golden apparel he rides like a lord,
And he carols a song as he crosses the ford.”

“ Sweet dove, I have warmed you to life in my
breast,

When the winter was dree :
Peep warily over the rim of your nest—
Is he comely to see? ”

“ His face is as pink as the salt marish-mallow,
And he kisses his hand as he rides up the fallow.”

“ Dear dove, does he come from the north or the
south ? ”

“ *He* may answer you that, with his lips to your
mouth.”

INTO grey ashes fell the moon,
And all its glimmering stars
Flew up, and went out one by one,
Blown against heaven's bars.

Like a puff of smoke from a foundered ship
A cloud rolled to the sky ;
I thought it the last breath of the moon
Extinguished utterly.

But Love laughed, and blew on the cloud—
And there was a burning rim,
Like as the fire that God's own breath
Blows quick, when hope is dim.

Out of the cloud that was the old
The little moon was born.
Ah ! never and never my moon is dead,
And never my hope's forlorn.

THY step fell on the bridge of Death,
And Love he sobbed on the hither side—
But that was long and long ago;
And long ago his tears were dried.

The hearts that to their dreams of thee
Vowed each its residue of life!—
Now, who, of all that sobbed with Love,
But lives and joys in babe and wife?

Such rush-light souls, ignoble flames!
Forget, great ghost, their suit of thee.
But no—thou gav'st them of thy fire;
Their children are the fruit of thee.

And I, thou never smil'dst upon—
What claim in heaven is mine to make?
Ah! thou art dead a score of years,
And I am lonely for thy sake.

POOR Philomel, poor tender-wit,
Is finished with life's fever ;
No love, but she was kind to it,
And no harm did she ever.

The holy dead lie straight as stone ;
But not with them her place is.
We kissed and left her all alone
To sleep among the daisies.

With folded hands the dead so meek
Look upward to their crosses.
But Philomel has laid her cheek
To slumber in the mosses.

Now roots the blue thyme in her breast
That was so sweet and sunny ;
Now bee-winged Loves come there to feast
On strains of burning honey.

All day the church-bells boom and call—
They shall not overtake her ;
No hymn but shepherd's madrigal,
No God but Love shall wake her.

Her silver ribbon'd crook hath she.
Pray Christ to her be given
To find the hills of Arcady,
And fold white lambs in Heaven.

LOVE SERIOUS

WHENAS the speedwell of an eye
 Shall root within a soul as shy;
 When beauty spare to scorn and flout,
 Because itself itself doth doubt—

Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
 Vanity shall cease its fairing;
 Maids be maids beyond comparing—
 Cuckoo calls.

When Phebe shall rebuke her glass
 For flattering a simple lass;
 And Bonnibel no longer ply
 The arts of conscious pudency—

Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
 Vanity shall end its fairing;
 Maids be maids beyond comparing—
 Cuckoo calls.

When coined love shall cease to lend
 Itself unto a worldly end,
 And every Joan shall learn to judge
 How careless gift makes after grudge—

Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
 Vanity shall cease its fairing;
 Maids be maids beyond comparing—
 Cuckoo calls,

Then, Phebe, let the cuckoo call,
And answer, darling, not at all.
If of yourself yourself is sure,
In vain shall vanity allure;

In vain, in vain
Love misterm for love his sporting,
Selfish Blue-beard come a-courting
All in vain.

SHE came ; and, O ! I caught her from her feet,
And lived a thousand lives in one short hour,
Because her arms were kind, her lips were sweet,
Because her heart swelled like a sheathed
flower.

And soul to soul we panted, each to each,
Leaving our broken phrases Love to mend,
Who laughed to fit the fragments of our speech
Into : “ Nought comes between us to the end.”

And, lo ! a little while, and, though the light
Of Love's unclouded rapture holds her eyes,
And though the oath we kissed to keep that night,
We smothered kissing—as a corn-rose dies
Yielding her petals up like drops of blood
To the wind's passion, for her seeds' behest,
Our broken oath hath broken into bud,
And flowers between us on its mother's breast.

ALL day across the skies
Swept cloudy argosies
 Their canvas hard a'strain ;
But fleet on fleet, with anchors weighed,
Drove proudly by, nor ever stayed
To land the little soul I prayed,
 And prayed of them in vain.

But, with the hush of even,
In all the winds of heaven
 A sudden truce abode—
And, lo! far down and silver-pale,
Below the rack, behind the gale,
A little moon, with crescent sail
 And starry cordage, rode.

So small a craft, I ween,
So great was never seen
 In bearing love's desire.
It came and stood above my roof ;
And all its plates were silver-proof ;
And from its bows about the loof
 Down dropt a spark of fire.

I gave a sigh in the dark;
I heard a cry in the dark
 That thrilled me through and through.
Sink down, vain argosies, in noon
Your useless hulks! My little moon
Has dared all heaven to bring the boon
 I asked in vain of you.

LOVE AT AUCTION

“WHO will buy a baby?
Make your offers all.
Each sprouting toe’s a bud of rose,
Each fist an elf’s puff-ball.

She cannot speak for laughing;
Like any top she’ll hum.
At worst a pout she’ll measure out
By biting rule of thumb.

Who’ll buy, who’ll buy a baby
For a pillow to his heart?”

Little boy bidder:—

“I’ll take the thing for a gold-curl ring
And my broken horse and cart.”

DROWZYDOZE

To G. W. C. 1894.

O, BABY! isn't it hot, my boy,
And aren't we sleepy all,
From mum and dad and their little lad
To puss on the garden wall?
That window glass like dazzling brass
Strikes fire across the street;
And the aspens fizzing outside the door
Seem frying in the heat.
Winky-winky, blinky-blinky,
Lulla-lullaby, sleep, boy!

All things are dumb; and the fat small thumb
Out of the bud mouth trails;
And the beady eyes of little house-mice
Are shut upon their tails;
And the brown snail licks the garden bricks
For moss to cool his tongue;
And the world turns round without a sound—
Not even a bell's ding-dong.
Winky-winky, blinky-blinky,
Lulla-lullaby, sleep, boy!

Now homing motes like tiny boats
Swim over sleepy eyes;
And their freight, it seems, is shining dreams
For heads of a little size.
They come from the Land of Nod, my son;
Their sails are the red corn-rose;
And they drop their anchors one by one
In the pool of Drowzydoze.
Winky-winky, blinky-blinky,
Lulla-lullaby, sleep, boy!

TO N. C. C.

August, 1900.

O, SUN, that call'st the rose to life,
 Why hatch the canker brood?
To link the honey with the knife,
 Hot master, is it good?

How better we, strange neighbour Sun,
 If thou wouldst sheathe thy blade,
And mould thine actions every one
 To please my little maid.

Here's innocence enough to graft
 A world with love of love.
O, take thine arrow from its haft,
 And use it so to prove.

O, learn when first thou'rt risen up,
 Forbearance of her face;
And still with grass and buttercup
 Make soft her dwelling-place.

O, follow on her daily round;
 And sink alone for this,
That all her daisies on the ground
 May purse their lips to kiss.

Dread angel with the flaming sword,
Keep fast thine Eden dour.
But hast thou mission from the Lord
To strike the exile's flower?

Not so revolt forgets itself;
Not so will cease to burn.
Put back thy brand upon the shelf,
And set us love to learn.

We took our fate; make no complaint;
We till our alien soil.
We but desire without taint
The fruitage of our toil.

Why, look, look here! couldst ever find
A type more winning sweet?
Do all for her—and so mankind
Will come to kiss God's feet.

THE little bonne, Marie.

(A moi, mon poupon!)

Spoke to her doll so wee :

(A moi, mon poupon!)

“ Hush, little son, sweet thing !

But wouldst thou be a king ? ”

(A moi, mon poupon!)

“ Thy sceptre grows in the mere,”

(A moi, mon poupon!)

“ Thy crown in the blossoming brere.”

(A moi, mon poupon!)

“ And under the passion flower

Shall be Thy bed and bower.”

(A moi, mon poupon!)

A rose she pinned at his side,

(A moi, mon poupon!)

And one to each foot she tied ;

(A moi, mon poupon!)

His cot she lined with rue,

And she named him her *Jésu*.

(A moi, mon poupon!)

HER COMING

WHENCE did our bird-soft baby come?
How learned to prattle of this for home?

Some sleepy nurse-angel let her stray,
And she found herself in the world one day.

She heard nurse calling, and further fled:
She hid herself in our cabbage bed.

There we came on her fast asleep,
What could we do but take and keep,

Carry her in and up the stair?
She would have died of cold out there.

She woke at once in a little fright;
But Love beckoned her from the light—

Lure we had lit, for dear love fain;
She had seen it shine through the window pane;

Lure we had kindled of flame and bliss,
To catch such a little ghost-moth as this,

Ah, me! it shrivelled her pretty wing.
Here she must stay, poor thing, poor thing!

HER PRAYER

Dear God, teach my fingers ten—
Teeny-weeny half-score men—
What Thy pleasure, what their work,
Day by day in shine or murk.
Two for pins to twist my curls
Into spun-silk spires and whorls;
Two to learn where *not* to hold;
Two to earn their belts of gold;
Two, the wee-est of the set—
Dear God, let them play as yet.
And the thumbs, though squat and small,
They shall be the props of all,
Solemn, sturdy, staunch and stiff,
Always ready—that is if
In my mouth they be not slid,
Like bees in sweet flowers hid.
Grimy, impish though they ben,
Dear God, they're Thy little men.
See them here together raise
Little steeple to Thy praise.

HER EPITAPH

With pain our pretty baby cried.
God called her, and she smiled and died.

WHERE are you going, my little maid ?
You will be lost in the dark outside—
You, who your face, at some fancied shade,
Must always in mummy's bosom hide.

There, the frog in my throat ! it shall croak no more.
Did it fret you, sweet ? I will sing so gay
Of the poor sad toys in the nursery drawer,
Waiting for baby to come and play.

No med'cine in heaven ? and we who feign
To love you ; and yet will not let you rest ?
Baby, 'twas God that invented pain
To claim the cure and be written blest.

Not by me, no, unless both He take.
My pain, too, earned its remedy.
Baby, O, baby, for mumsey's sake !
God does not love you so well as I.

WE two. And one must die
First. O, not I!
For then you only
Would be lonely.

Who reaches first the goal
Takes prize and fame,
The loser pays the toll.
It is the game.

Dear, I would have you win,
For I can tell,
You'd use your triumph well,
Who know you out and in.

You would not rest
Your saints among,
Until you'd wrung
From them the promise blest
That death in pleasant guise
Should close mine eyes.

But I (it is man's way),
 If first to heaven won,
 Should laugh " Well done ! "
And, having gained, should say,
 " What terror now shall bode
 Since I have shown the road ? "
And happy, being dead,
 Fear thrown aside,
Should make scorn of your dread
 Unjustified,
Should bask within the light,
 Thinking, " Her night,
 The darker drawn,
 Ensures the happier dawn. "

Then go, sweetheart,
I'm selfish. Go thou first,
Leave me to play the part
 That only seems accurst.
Leave me, and smiling say
 " He does but play
When bowing to the stress
 Of loneliness. "

POEMS—VARIOUS

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

In the night, full in the face of it,
By a soul appalling
The unspeakable, the unpardonable sin
Was sped beyond recalling.

A wind, like never another wind
That rises on the dark,
Answered, and fell like a hissing star,
His living soul its mark.

Down, straight from the Polar Star
It dropped as heavy as lead,
And, touching no hair of his wife beside,
Smote the man in his bed.

A mocking ghost, he rose in the dawn
To learn the best or worst :
He sought his own image in the glass ;
But he looked at his wife first.

The face of himself was the face of himself,
The face of yesterday ;
But the face of his wife was a dreadful face,
A thing to hate and slay.

He turned with a curse, he turned with a prayer
To meet his child at the door ;
But the face of his child was a dreadful face,
A thing to strike and abhor.

Now, thus should he know, and for ever and ever
The curse of the Holy Ghost :
Himself to all should seem as himself,
But to him all else seem lost.

THE POISONER'S LABORATORY.

It stinks and slinks within a holt
Some ancient horror doth enthrall;
Where plunged the dreadful thunderbolt
A deep well gasps beside the wall.
Fit matrix for a venomèd breed,
Its labours yield without a sound;
There very silence run to seed
In fungus bubbles from the ground.

These spawns are larded all with grease
The chimney vomits down on them.
By night and day that does not cease
Thick-pouring through a crusted
phlegm.

And, festering round the poison core,
A mile the wood is gangrenous
With blotchèd leaf and huskèd sore
And growths of cankering polypus.

Year-long the damnèd thicket, grown
Enamoured of its own complaint,
About the lazar-house hath blown
In leprous flowers and seeds of taint.
K

Strange fruits that never grew before,
Like hanging tumours gorged with blood,
Loll apoplectic by the door,
Or fall and burst upon its wood.

Sometimes the stealthy hatch will ope',
And through the slit a squalid claw
Protrude and in the fungus grope,
And clutch a handful and withdraw.
Sometimes behind the glaze of glass
A face inhuman, masked with glaze
Itself, glares deathly and doth pass,
Leaving who peers in sick amaze.

For never soul shall steal unscann'd
To look on him that brews within.
The bellows purr beneath his hand—
Dear God, it is a wicked sin!
The chimney heaves an acrid spleen;
The very air is seized awry.
No creature whom those fumes obscene
Encompass but must surely die.

* * * * *

A knight came ringing steel-astride.
He felt the horror on his cheek.

“ Way for the winds of God ! ” he cried,
And drove a tunnel through the reek.
The furnace vaulted into flame ;
The walls were burst and boiled away.
Christ’s woe upon the place of shame,
Forejudged e’en of Judgment Day !

THE TWO CROWS

THEY were two daggled crows up a tree—

Heigho!

Famished and cold as crows could be,

Down by the greenwood side O!

Says she: " Shall you and I foregather,

Yet once more when the Spring comes, father?

Heigho!" says she.

Below sat a woman sore distrest—

Heigho!

She held a dead child unto her breast,

Down by the greenwood side O!

And still as she held, she made her moan:

" Sweet, sweet baby, don't leave me alone!

Don't O!" said she.

He was putting an edge to his bill—

Heigho!

She " dressed " up to him, coaxing still,

Down by the greenwood side O!

" Blackguard, dear," of a sudden said she:

" What became of our fledglings three?

Heigho!" said she.

He flirted his wings, his beak he clapped—

Heigho!

“ One he was shot, and one was trapped

Down by the greenwood side O!

And the third *I* killed, and picked her brain.

So you'd have us to mate in the Spring again,

Heh, crow? ” said he.

He cockt an eye to the foot of the tree—

Heigho!

“ Girls make passable meat,” said he,

“ When nothing else may serve, O!

Always resourceful, Soot, my pop!

(When do you think she there will drop?) ”—

“ Heigho! ” said she.

She turned from him with a pensive cluck—

Heigho!

“ Blackguard,” she said—and there she stuck,

Down by the greenwood side O!

He paused in his task, with sideling head:

“ Well, what's the matter with you? ” he said.

“ Heh, crow? ” said he.

“ I wish,” she began—and stopped again—

Heigho!

“ Out with it, Sooty, and make it plain! ”

Says he, with a thund'ring scowl O!

“ Only,” she answered—“ I’m so bereft—
Our one wee henny—you might have left——”
“ That’s low,” said he.

She edged to his side, with a croak and quake—
Heigho!

“ Blackguard! ” she said: “ For the poor chick’s
sake

Shan’t we forego this meal O? ”

He withered her then with a single look:—

“ You for a mate again, you rook!
Bye-low! ” said he.

THE PASSING GHOST

THROUGH the caves of night dumfounded,
By blind negation bounded,
 In the weary round of doom
 I have reached the ancient room—
 The old familiar room
Once I slept in who am dead.
Is there someone in the bed?
There is someone in my stead.
 Yet I shiver with delight,
 So emerged upon the sight
 From the throbbing
 And the sobbing
 Of the icy wells of night.

See the dark a sweet release
 To the sleeper as he sleeps :
Of the dark to win surcease,
 See the spectre how he weeps
Dusty flakes from withered eyes—
 Ashes from a charnel spring!—
With the whisper of sunrise
 He must be upon the wing.

Ere the daisy lifts its lashes ;
Ere the dawn the roof-tree washes,
 He must turn him in affright ;
 He must turn him from the light
 To the throbbing
 And the sobbing
Of the icy wells of night.

To follow, as I shiver,
Night round the world for ever,
 That—that is my doom.
 Yet I have reached the room,
And so may reach again :—
O, ecstasy in pain !
 O, wild taper in my gloom !

Is he dreaming, as I shake
Standing here? He doth awake,
 Slumber-warm, content-replete,
Sees the light across the ceiling
Like a jack-o'-lanthorn stealing
 From the waggon in the street ;—
 Turns him happy with a sigh,
 Thinking “ Day comes by and by.”

Yes, to him with all delight :—
And my hollow heart is shaken
By the thoughts that new awaken
From the throbbing
And the sobbing
Of the icy wells of night.

To follow, as I shiver,
Night round the world for ever :—
And the silence of the moon
Is my spectral dead high-noon :
And the stars alway—
Rowelled spurs that goad
Me on my dark road—
Drive me from the day.

When the morning horn makes thunder,
When the cow wakes in her stall,
When a happy wind comes under
The doorway in the hall,
When the twitter of the lark
Seems the turning of the wards
In the lock of the close dark,
And a sound comes from the fords ;

When a shapeless blot doth bloom
In the blackness of the room
 From the casement—in abasement
I must turn me to my doom :
I must turn me in affright
 To the throbbing
 And the sobbing
Of the icy wells of night
I must turn me to my doom :—
Yet I have reached the room,
 And so may reach again,
 Winning ecstasy in pain,
Seeing light within the gloom.

MEMORIES

SIGHS on the twilight; faces fancy-kist;
The sunset on the lonely hills; the smell
Of pillowing thyme; the moon behind the mist,
And throbbings of the love-sick Philomel—

Farewell! Farewell!

They speak of what,
Far off and very long ago, Farewell?

As I came by the fields, a weary lark
Straight on a thread of song from heaven fell;
And both mine eyes with sudden tears were dark,
And something caught my heart-strings like a knell.

Farewell! Farewell!

He sang of what,
Far off and very long ago, Farewell?

I walk on graves; the dead beneath my feet
Moan 'midst their roots of yew and immortelle:
“What cry was that? What dream so far and
sweet?

What world? What time, ere death-in-life befell?”

Farewell! Farewell!

O, never more!

O, never, never, never more, Farewell!

HE set his teeth to a wintry reed,
Chattered his fingers on the stops.
God's love ! we saw the prun'd vine bleed ;
The lark broke song from an April mead,
The butterfly lit the copse.

He thrummed an air on a ribboned lute ;
His breast was tanned and bare to the sun.
God's fear ! we saw the world drop mute ;
The snow fell white over man and brute
Before he half was done.

Ah ! who sings truest of all doth sing
Of flowers, in winter ; snow, in spring.

“ 'Tis Christ His feast,” said Short to Long.
“ Let’s pass the night in drink and song.”

“ The liquor must not be too mild
For toasting of that holy Child,”

Said Long. “ Them Jews was blind,” said he;
“ But not so ‘ blind ’ as we will be.”

They drank Him once, and twice, and thrice;
The main brace they began to splice.

A child’s voice wailed outside the door;
“ O, let me enter, I implore!

“ 'Tis freezing cold, and dark, and dire.
O, let me warm me at your fire! ”

“ No place for children here,” said Long,
And bid him “ cut his lucky ” strong.

“ We’re keeping of Christ Jesus’ feast.
Clear out,” said Short, “ you little beast! ”

They sang to “ David’s royal Son,”
And not till all the drink was done

Abstained; then staggered to the door,
And sobered at the sight they saw.

Stark on the snow Christ baby lay.
'Twas Him those sots had cursed away.

Now tell me, what availed them, then,
To keep Christ out and Christmas in?

HEAVEN'S NURSERY

“ SINNER, sinner, whence do you come ? ”

“ From the bitter earth they called my home.”

“ Sinner, sinner, why do you wait ? ”

“ I fear to knock at the golden gate :

“ My crimes were heavy ; my doom is sure,
And I dread the anguish I must endure.”

“ Had you ever a child down there ? ”

“ One—but it died, and I learnt despair.”

“ Here you will find it, behind the gate.”

“ God forbid ! for it felt my hate——

“ Shrunk in the frost of my cruelties.

More than the Judge's I fear its eyes.”

“ Hist ! At the keyhole place your ear.

Sinner, what is the sound you hear ?

“ Is it ten thousand babes at play ?

Heaven's nursery lies that way.

“ Through it to judgment all must fare.
It was God’s pity placed it there.”

The gate swung open ; the sinner past ;
Little hands caught and held him fast.

“ While you wait the call of the Nameless One,
There’s time for a game at ‘ Touch-and-Run ’ ! ”

He played with them there in that shining place,
With the hot tears scorching his furrowed
face—

Played, till the voice rang dread and clear :
“ Where is the sinner ? I wait him here ! ”

Then shouting with laughter, one and all,
They pushed him on to the Judgment Hall ;

Stood by him ; swarmed to the daïs steps,
A jumble of gleeful eyes and lips.

The Judge leaned stern from His Judgment Throne:
“ *I gave thee—where is thy little one ?* ”

Wildly the culprit caught his breath :
“ Lord, I have sinned. My doom be death.”

He hung his head with a broken sob.

There sprang a child from the rosy mob—

“Daddy!” it cried, with a joyful shriek;

Leapt to his arms and kissed his cheek.

But he put it from him with bursting sighs,

And looked on the Judge with swimming eyes;

Stood abashed in his bitter shame,

Waiting the sentence that never came.

From the Throne spoke out the thundered Word:

“*This be thy doom!*” No more he heard,

For a chime of laughter from baby throats

Took up those crashing organ notes,

Mixed with; silenced them; made them void—

And the children’s laughter was unalloyed.

“This be thy doom,” came a little squeak,

“To play with us here at ‘hide-and-seek’!”

Thrice did the Judge essay to frown;

Thrice did the children laugh Him down—

Till, at the last, He caught and kissed
The maddest of all and the merriest ;

Turned to the sinner, with smiling face :
“ These render futile the Judgment Place,

“ Sunniest rascals, imp and elf,
Who think they can better the Judge Himself.

“ Sinner—whatever thy sins may be,
Theirs is the sentence—go from Me ! ”

/

HERE'S a comrade blithe
To the wild wood hieth—
Follow and find !
Loving both least and best,
His love takes still a zest
From the song-time of the wind.

The chuckling birds they greet him,
The does run forth to meet him—
Follow and find !
Strange visions shalt thou see ;
Learn lessons new to thee
In the song-time of the wind.

Couldst, then, the dear bird kill
That kiss'd thee with her bill ?
Follow and find
How great, having strength, to spare
That trusting Soft-and-fair
In the song-time of the wind.

He is both God and Man;
He is both Christ and Pan—
Follow and find
How, in the lovely sense,
All flesh being grass, wakes thence
The song-time of the wind.

“ SOMEWHERE there is a stream, I know,
Whose bed no shade of death defiles,
But continents of lilies blow
Between the margins of its isles.

“ Eterne, the honeyed air their food,
Their candid texture night by night
In dear angelic sleep renewed,
They bloom unfading on the sight.

“ Or take and give an endless dower,
Where all eternity makes room,
Miles upon myriad miles of flower—
Æons of beauty and perfume.

All round the turf with fruit is spilled
For aching lips, like globes of fire,
And love's from happy love distilled,
And sin's unborn of gorged desire.

There is not pain, nor thought of pain,
Nor knowledge of one harsh decree;
But forces their sweet ends attain
Through a commutual pliancy.

Deep from a mist of wood and dawn
The dryad calls like unseen bird ;
And chuckle of sly-crouching faun
In loops of rushy pools is heard.

Roses, on softer bosoms laid—
The perfect view, the perfect part :
There maid is ever more a maid,
Though passion melts upon her heart.

Nor grief nor cry can enter by
The margins of that dear estate,
Whose bounds are all eternity—
Man's last inheritance from Fate,

When in his soul the world be dead—
That evil germ of sorrow and spite,
Whose secret once discoveréd
Shall perish in the Infinite.

THE night is dark, the wet winds sweep,
On shuttered panes the tempests drum,
The stormy roads are flogged with rain.
Push on, brave heart! and not in vain—
For rest shall come :
“ He giveth His beloved sleep ! ”

Nay, never pause to breathe and weep !
No home is thine or housing here.
To that small plat of soil and weed
Thou askest for thine utmost need
Push on ! for there
“ He giveth His beloved sleep . ”

.

Draw down his weary eyelids, keep
The daylight from his dark repose.
Death hath given him a sweet face
To whom Life never showed a grace,
For now he knows
“ He giveth His beloved sleep . ”

LOVE and Forever would wed,
Fearless in Heaven's sight.
Life came to them and said,
" Lease ye my house of light ! "

He put them on earth to bed,
All in the noonday bright :
" Sooth," to Forever Love said,
" Here may we prosper right."

Sudden day waned and fled :
Truth saw Forever in night.
" We are deceived," he said ;
" Who shall pity our plight ? "

Death, winging by o'erhead,
Heard them moan in affright.
" Hold by my hem," he said ;
" I go the way to light."

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